

Lesson 39

A Bride for Isaac

God led Abraham's servant to Rebekah, who became Isaac's wife.

Overview

Lesson Focus

When Abraham sent his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac, God demonstrated his control even in difficult situations. God kept his promise, providing Rebekah as a bride for Isaac according to his perfect plan.

Key Passages

Genesis 24:13–14, 24:19–20, 24:26

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go . . . to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

With a solemn oath, a quest to a distant land, an unexpected stranger, and the search for a bride, Genesis 24 is the remarkable account of God’s sovereign provision of a wife for Isaac. Through Isaac and Rebekah, God would keep his promises to Abraham—to increase his descendants to as many as the sand and the stars; to give them a rich inheritance in the land of Canaan, taking possession of the cities of their enemies; and to bless all nations on earth (Genesis 12:2–3, 22:16–18).

It is important to mention two events that are described in Genesis 22, two chapters before the account of this lesson. The first event is God’s dramatic test of Abraham’s faith. Abraham demonstrated trust in the sovereignty of God (Hebrews 11:17) by not withholding his son, the son of promise—Isaac. God then reiterated his promise to bless all nations through Abraham’s descendant. The second event, although a seemingly obscure fact, is the birth of Abraham’s grandniece, Rebekah (Genesis 22:20–23). God was setting the stage for the fulfillment of his promises.

Abraham—By the opening of Genesis 24, Abraham’s beloved wife Sarah had died (Genesis 23). Abraham was experiencing the blessings of wealth promised by God (Genesis 12:2). However, though God had promised that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5), as of yet, Isaac (his son) had given him no grandchildren. In chapter 24, Abraham called his oldest servant to return to Abraham’s relatives and bring back a wife for Isaac. It is interesting that Abraham did not go himself, nor did he allow Isaac to leave

Canaan. Isaac's future was to be in Canaan and nowhere else, for God had promised this land to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1–9, 13:14–18, 15:1–21).

The Servant—The servant proved obedient and loyal in every way, faithfully yielding to his master and the son. He modeled a walk of faith by praying for specific guidance while actively preparing, traveling, testing, and waiting for God's answer (Genesis 24:12–13). And when he received God's remarkable answer, the servant responded with worship and eagerness to return the bride to his master's son (Genesis 24:52–54).

Rebekah—Through the providence of God, Rebekah was gracious and eager to submit to his plans for her life in fulfilling his eternal purposes.

Isaac—Just as Isaac once trusted his father's will even though it meant stretching out on an altar for sacrifice, he now trusted his father to secure a bride for him.

The history of Isaac and Rebekah is a small reflection of the Creator God's great story of redemption. From before the time sin first entered the world, God has had a plan to call out a people for himself. He poured out the awful penalty of sin upon his holy Son and then raised him up. He sent his Spirit into the world to prepare a bride, the church, for his Son. Those who have abandoned all, and have put their trust in God, share fully in the inheritance promised through the Son (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 19:29, 25:34; Ephesians 1:3–12; Colossians 1:22; Revelation 19:7).

Historical/Apologetics Background

It was important to Abraham that Isaac's wife be a relative from his homeland, Haran (Genesis 24:4). The history and descendants of Isaac's grandfather, Terah, are given in Genesis 11:27–32, allowing us to confidently determine the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah. Terah was the father of three sons: Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Of Terah's three sons, Abraham moved to Canaan, Nahor remained in northwest Mesopotamia, and Haran died in Ur (Genesis 11:28).

Abraham's brother, Nahor, became the father of eight sons. One of those sons, Bethuel, became the father of Rebekah (Genesis 22:21–23). Thus, God records for us that Rebekah and Isaac were first cousins once removed.

In considering marital unions in the Old Testament between family members like that of Rebekah and Isaac, keep in mind what Genesis 5:4 teaches. Adam and Eve had sons and daughters, and close relatives married. This was the way the world was populated at the beginning and repopulated after the flood with Noah's family. The law against close relatives marrying didn't come until the time of Moses (Leviticus 18–20). Before then, there were few genetic defects (mutations) that today make it inadvisable for close relatives to marry. God's Word has the answers—we need to begin with his truth.

Often people are quick to discount the Old Testament as untrue, unrelated, or unreliable. However, God has provided this information—all of it—so we can see

that it is precisely recorded and intended to weave a tapestry of redemption from beginning to end.

God often reveals things in the world today that confirm his history. This account we are studying is a good example.

Because of what we know today about Mesopotamian culture, we can understand Abraham's reluctance for his son to return there. And we can see why God had to call Abraham away. Archaeological discoveries in the area reveal that the people worshipped the moon god, Sin (also called Nanna). There are rather horrifying accounts of royal burial pits that include not only a royal personage but numerous servants and musicians who evidently committed mass suicide. It becomes clear that God intended Abraham, the one through whom he planned to bless all the families of the earth, to journey to a new location—one which was in a far more strategic spot for disseminating this global blessing.

The fact that the ancient city of Haran still exists today is further confirmation of the Bible's history. The Bible tells us that this is where Abraham's father, Terah, took Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (Genesis 11:31). In this same area, Turkish villages still bear the name of Abraham's grandfather and great-grandfather, Nahor and Serug (Genesis 11:22). God's Word is true and provides us with answers to questions we may encounter.

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